and is totally unacceptable. Government have also apprised the international community of Pakistan's role in activities directed against India.

Siacben Settlement with Pakistan

224. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have offered to Pakistan, as a confidence building measure a Siachen settlement based on disengagement and redeployment of forces according to a mutually agreed schedule; and

(b) if so, what is Pakistan Government's reaction and response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On 19 February, 1994 Pakistan conveyed its response which is under consideration with the Government,

Pakistan U.S. Armed Forces Joint Exercise

225. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the successive joint exercise of the armed forces of Pakistan and U.S. held recently in the rugged mountains of Peshawar with the objective of preparing Pakistan and American troops for highly specialised high altitude warfare; and

(b) if so, how do Govt. view the growing US military cooperation with Pakistan and how such military exercises have a bearing on the defence of the country's frontiers?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) Government are aware that a month long joint training exercise was conducted from 6 January to 10 February, 1994 between the US Army Special Forces and Pakistan Special Services Group in the Cherat region of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. A similar exercise was also conducted in February 1993.

(b) Government constantly monitor all developments having a bearing on India's security, including the on-going military cooperation between the US and Pakistan. Government take all necessary measures to safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of the nation.

Pending Passports at Chandigarh and Jalandhar Passport Offices

226. SHRI VIRENDRA K ATARI A: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a huge number of passports are lying pending at Chandigarh and Jalandhar passport offices and people have to wait for more than a year to get their passports;

(b) what is the number of such pending passports during 1993 and till date at Chandigarh and Jalandhar passport offices;

(c) whether there was any proposal under Government's consideration to provide more staff to these passport offices; if so, whether the same has been done; and

(d) what steps Government are taking to relieve the people and by when people will see the results?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) The number of Passport applications pending for over one month at Chandigarh and Jalandhar passport offices was 49,900 and 67,032 as on 31.12.93 and 44,785 and 58,928 on 4.2.94 respectively. The time taken for the issue of a passport on a first-cum-firstserved basis when the application was complete in all respects

was approximately 278 days at Chandigarh and 194 days at Jalandhar as on 4.2.94.

(c) Yes, Sir. Additional staff members have started being appointed.

(d) Government have taken a number of steps to expedite the issue of passports which, *inter alia* include augmentation of staff strength, increase in the supply of passport booklets and introduction of a productivity linked incentive scheme. The pendency in Chandigarh and Jalandhar started coming down with effect from July 1993. Government are making every effort to bring it down expeditiously.

Effect of the Earthquake In Los Angeles *on* People on Indien Origin

227. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the houses and business premises of several people of Indian origin suffered extensive damage in the earthquake which devasted the suburbs of Los Angeles recently;

(b) if so, the facts and details of the losses suffered by the people of Indian origin;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to provide help to the people of Indian origin there; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) and (b) About 500 households were affected in the Los Angeles earthquake out of a total population of approximately 30,000 Indian-Americans in the San Fernando Valley. About 50 homes need to be rebuilt, approximately 150—200 homes suffered substantial damage requiring major repair works and about 250 homes suffered minor damage. Approximately 50 Indian-American owned businesses including motels, restaurants, grocery and liquor stores suffered considerable losses. A few Indian-Americans suffered minor injuries but there was no loss of life.

(c) and (d) Following the earthquake, the Deputy Consul General of India in San Francisco visited Los Angeles and met with members of the Indian American community. At the suggestion of CGI, San Francisco, the Federation of Indo-American Associations (FIA) in Southern California set up a Sub-committee to provide assistance to victims in filing claims for state and federal assistance, dealing with insurance companies, banks etc. India's Consul General in San Fiancisco also visited Los Angeles and met leaders of the Indo-American community. CGI San Francisco continue to maintain regular contact with the Indian community in Los Angeles and to monitor the situation.

Normalisation of Relation between India and Pakistan

228. SHRI BISHAMBHAR NATH PANDE: SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan's anti-India propaganda on Kashmir slowed down normalising relations between India and Pakistan; and

(b) what is the outcome of the recent Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) Pakistan's anti-India campaign, including its attempts to internationalise the J&K issue through its efforts to introduce a resolution on the human rights situation in J&K and its strident and provocative Pakistani statements and actions, vitiate the atmosphere of bilateral relations and are not conducive to the process of normalization of relations.

(b) At the Foreign Secretary level talks held at Islamabad from 1—3 January,